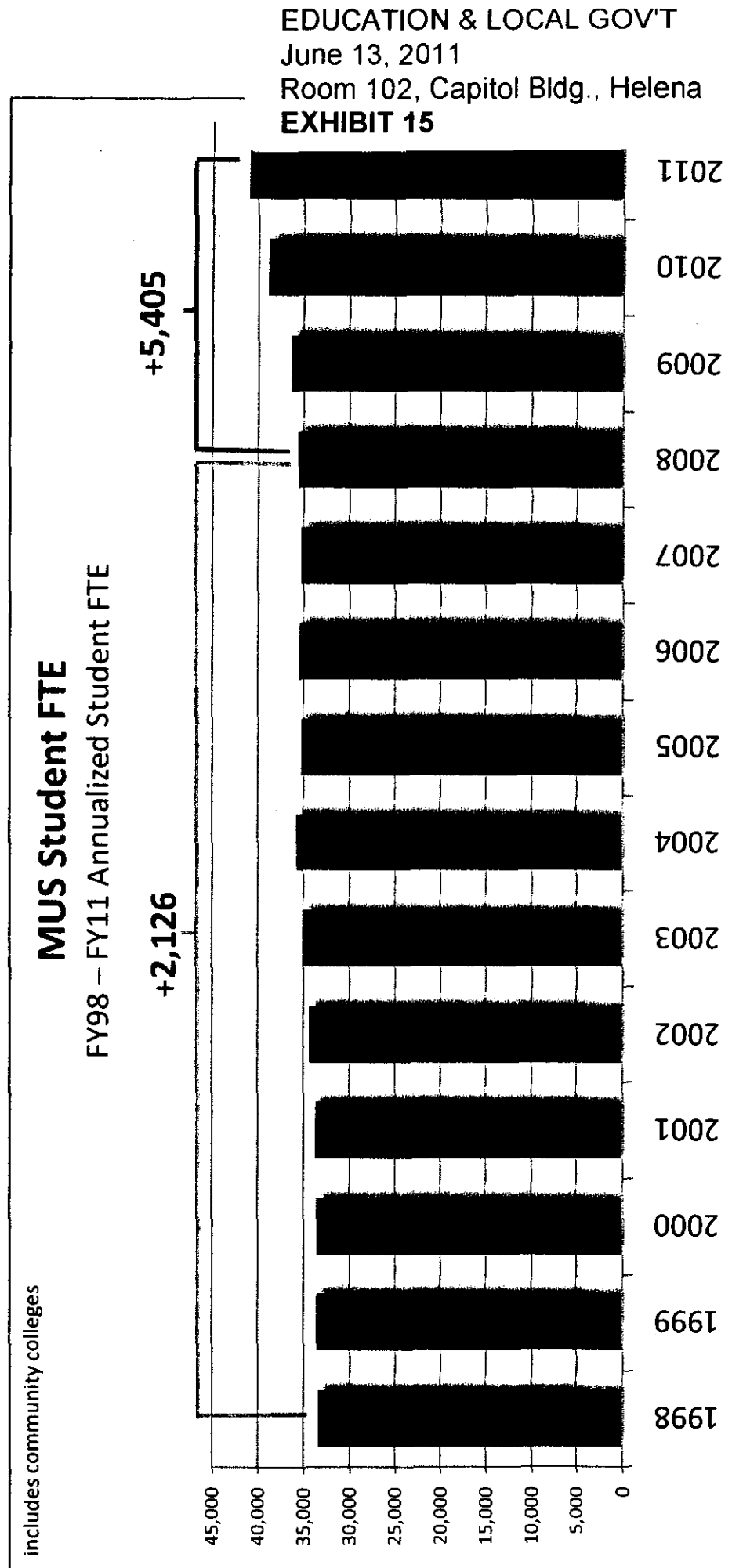


Enrollment Growth

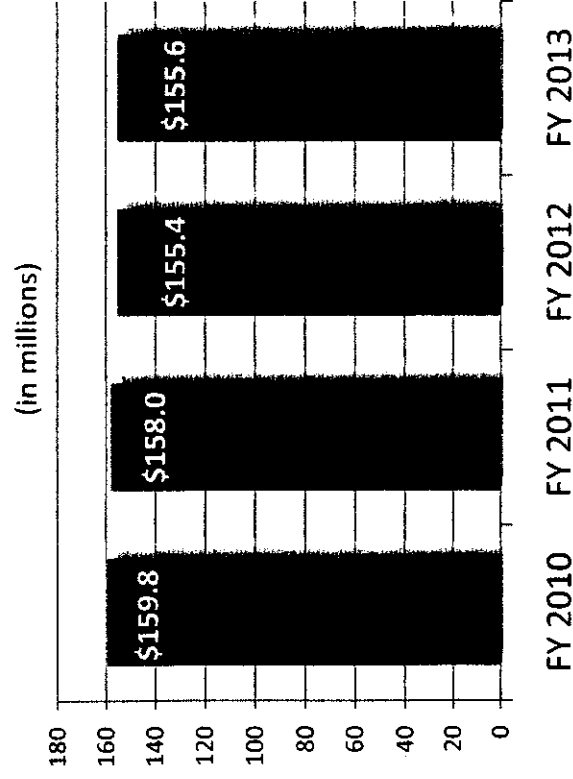
- ❖ Enrollment growth in the MUS continues at an accelerated pace --- now over 40,000 FTE
- ❖ Increase of over 5,400 FTE since 2008....at no other time in the history of the MUS have we seen equivalent levels of growth
- ❖ The increase in FTE in the past three years is over twice the amount of growth occurring in the ten years prior to 2008



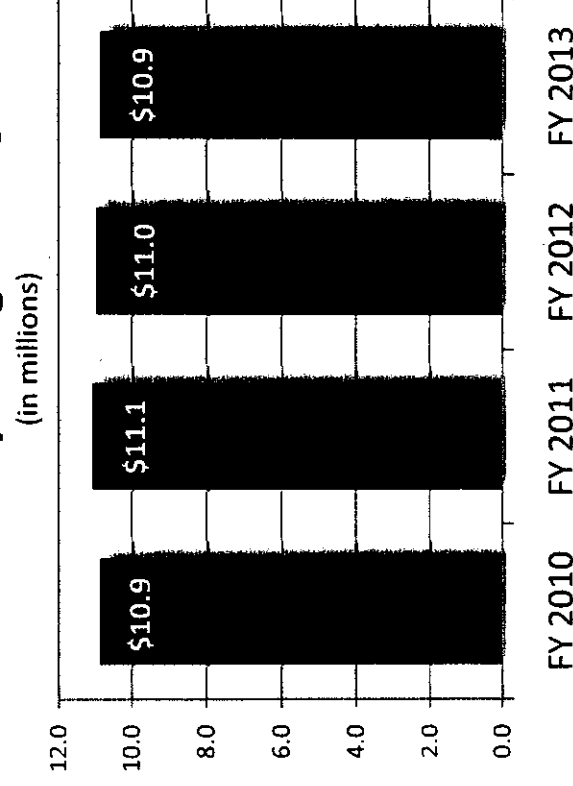
MUS Appropriations

- ❖ In comparison to the 2011 biennium funding level, appropriations for MUS Education Units declined by \$6.8 M in the 2013 biennium.
- ❖ Community College funding remained relatively stable when comparing 2011 biennium funding to the 2013 biennium.

MUS Ed Units — Program 9



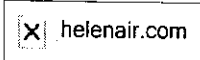
Community Colleges — Program 4





By ALLISON MAIER Independent Record | Posted: Sunday, June 12, 2011 12:00 am

Even though it's been more than a decade since the schools became designated colleges of technology associated with the state's flagship campuses, many people still see them as the vocational technical schools — “vo-techs” — they started as, Cech said. Their programs have continued to expand over the years and, by 2013, the university system hopes to see them



'Vo-tech' not what it used to be

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A decade ago, across the spectrum of Montana's two- and four-year colleges and universities, there were 24 different courses that were the rough equivalent of Algebra 101. Sometimes credits from one school would transfer to another; sometimes they wouldn't.

Today, there is essentially one algebra class, with one syllabus and universal transferability across the state.

It's efficiencies like these that John Cech, the state's new deputy commissioner for two-year and community college education, hopes to implement more of as part of a three-year push to improve the marketing, enrollment, image and overall success of Montana's two-year colleges.

In a meeting this week with the Independent Record editorial board, Cech and his boss, higher education commissioner Sheila Stearns, said turf wars have hindered efforts at efficiency and cooperation, but that the past decade has seen plenty of positive changes both across the two-year system and within those colleges' relationships with the universities.

There's still plenty of work to do. Montana ranks last in the West in the percentage of adults engaged in college coursework. Developing programs that are more suited for working adults, with rolling admissions and night and weekend courses, can help improve that figure, and ultimately our state's level of education will go a long way toward determining how competitive we can be in an increasingly complex global economy.

And there are more efficiencies to be found. There are currently 12 different forms and 12 different processes for students to apply for dual high school/college credits, depending on which courses at which colleges are involved. Even accepting that Montana is a huge and somewhat diverse state, there's no need for that much duplication in a state with fewer than 1 million people.

Despite burgeoning enrollment in Helena and elsewhere over the past decade, two-year colleges have image problems to overcome. Several still carry the anachronistic "college of technology" name, which is mandated by law but is quite outdated considering the broad range of courses and certificates offered at UM-Helena and the other "CoT's." Parents still threaten their kids to get their grades up, lest they be consigned to the "vo-tech." Another unfair (not to mention inaccurate) threat, and a negative perception Cech and the state will fight to abolish.

Certain programs are already deservingly popular — Cech acknowledged choke points in tracks like welding and nursing. But in other areas, not only is there excess capacity, but by growing the two-year colleges and delivering more students with associate's degrees into four-year degree programs, the system can fill more upper level courses at the universities, where there's also room to accommodate more students.

Cech said that in many ways, UM-Helena can serve as a model for other two-year colleges across Montana, in areas like developing partnerships with the local school district and business community and bridging the gap between being "just" a college of technology and a broadly fundamental two-year college. The colleges' transfer mission, workforce development and community development pieces will all determine how successful our two-year colleges are in the future.

We've long championed UM-Helena as a terrific option for learners of many stripes — those looking to complete basic coursework close to home before transferring to a university, adults hoping to earn an education while working and raising a family and anyone who wants to get in to learn one of the college's several trades, to say nothing of UM-Helena's excellent nursing, science or other programs. It's exciting to see the state's higher education leaders focus more attention on the Montana's two-year colleges, and it can mean only good things both here and across the state.

operating as comprehensive community colleges, he said. Among the benefits they can offer students is the ability to complete their first two years of college at a COT — with lower tuition rates — before transferring to a four-year institution to finish their education, Cech said.

There appear to be other advantages to obtaining an associate's degree through a college of technology. Montana graduates in 2008-2009 with such degrees made an average of \$29,098 a year, whereas those with bachelor's degrees had an average salary of \$25,760. And the training at the colleges has been attracting more people over the past decade. Enrollment in the schools increased by nearly 3,000 full-time-equivalents between 2001 and 2011, to what is now more than 6,000 FTEs. Dislocated workers affected by such industry closures as Smurfit-Stone Container Corp. in Frenchtown and Stimson Lumber in Bonner have boosted those numbers in recent years.

2. Ensuring that every Montana region is served by a two-year college or program that acts as a regional educational clearinghouse hub.

This would encompass a number of things, like workforce education relevant to local businesses and industries and additional program opportunities in the early morning and evening or on weekends so working adults can use them. It would also include expanding dual-credit opportunities for high school students, including options through the online Montana Digital Academy, as MSU-Great Falls and UM-Missoula have done and five other two-year colleges in Montana, including UM-Helena, are in the process of making available, Cech said.

Communication among the various two-year colleges is another aspect of the objective. As an example, the schools recently collaborated to apply for a \$17.5 million U.S. Department of Labor grant that would allow them to change the way developmental math is taught in the state. It would use a computer-based program that identifies an individual's strengths and weaknesses in the subject, Cech said.

3. Creating efficiencies through coordinated curricula and integrated technology. That includes initiatives like establishing a common course numbering system across all the schools in the Montana University System, which ensured that equivalent courses are designated with the same number — "M121" for college algebra, for example — so it's easier to transfer credits among institutions, Cech said.

4. Including performance-based components in Montana's higher education funding model. Essentially, using various performance metrics to track every college's productivity and then rewarding the schools who've seen the biggest increases.

5. Ensuring that constituent groups are aware, informed and engaged with two-year education. That includes collaborating with policymakers, K-12 educators, students and parents, and four-year institutions.

The Board of Regents has requested updates at each of its monthly meetings to see how the College!Now efforts are progressing.

Additional information about the initiative is available at www.mus.edu/twoyear/COLLEGEnow/default.asp.

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